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Detroit Free Press news briefs

November 6, 2007

Mother charged with killing child

The mother of a 2-year-old Detroit girl who died Saturday morning has been charged with felony murder in connection with her daughter's beating.

Nicole Holloway, 32, was arraigned on murder and child abuse charges Monday in 36th District Court and ordered held without bond by Magistrate Sidney Barthwell Jr. She is accused of beating her daughter to death at the Packard Motel, 1500 E. Grand Blvd.

Holloway allegedly told a hotel manager that she had hit her child and that the police needed to be called.

When police arrived, the girl was taken to a hospital, where she was pronounced dead on arrival.

Police said the woman admitted that she beat her daughter with her hands because she was angry with her.

Maria Miller, a spokeswoman for the Wayne County Prosecutor's Office, said the child died of blunt trauma.

Felony murder is punishable by a mandatory sentence of life in prison, upon conviction.



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Published November 6, 2007

Detroit mother charged with killing 2-year-old daughter

Midday update

Associated Press

DETROIT - The mother of a 2-year-old Detroit girl who died Saturday has been charged in her daughter's beating.

The Detroit Free Press reports 32-year-old Nicole Holloway was arraigned Monday on felony murder and child abuse charges.

Officers were dispatched to a Detroit motel after Holloway allegedly told a manager that she had hit her child and that police needed to be called.

Police say the woman admitted that she beat her daughter with her hands because she was angry with her.

Maria Miller of the Wayne County prosecutor's office says the child died of blunt trauma. Holloway could receive life in prison, if convicted.

Information from: Detroit Free Press, www.freep.com

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Nov 6, 12:56 PM EST

Appeals court rejects Michigan man's child support lawsuit

By KATHY BARKS HOFFMAN
Associated Press Writer

LANISING, Mich. (AP) -- A federal appeals court has upheld a lower court's decision to dismiss a lawsuit filed by a men's rights group on behalf of a man who said he shouldn't have to pay child support for his ex-girlfriend's daughter.

The 6th Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals, in a decision released Tuesday, agreed with U.S. District Judge David Lawson in Bay City that Matthew Dubay's suit was frivolous and ordered him to pay attorney fees to the state. However, the three-member appeals court panel declined to award the state attorney fees for the appeal.

Dubay, a 25-year-old from Saginaw Township, had said his ex-girlfriend, Lauren Wells, knew he didn't want to have a child and she assured him repeatedly she couldn't get pregnant because of a medical condition.

He argued that if a pregnant woman can choose among abortion, adoption or raising a child, a man involved in an unintended pregnancy should have the choice of declining the financial responsibilities of fatherhood.

But Lawson disagreed and rejected Dubay's argument that Michigan's paternity law violates the U.S. Constitution's equal protection clause.

The National Center for Men in Old Bethpage, N.Y. - which prepared the suit - nicknamed it "Roe v. Wade for Men" because it involves the issue of male reproductive rights. The nickname drew objections from women's rights organizations.

Dubay sued the Saginaw County prosecutor and Wells in March, contesting an order to pay \$500 a month in child support for a girl born to Wells in

2005. Michigan Attorney General Mike Cox later intervened in the case and argued for its dismissal.

Dubay previously had acknowledged the suit was a long shot.

"This case stops a parent from skirting their responsibility and neglecting a child they brought into this world," Cox said in a statement.

The case is Matthew Dubay v Lauren Wells.

On the Net:

National Center for Men: <http://www.nationalcenterformen.org>

6th Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals: <http://www.ca6.uscourts.gov>

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MT. CLEMENS

Grant attorneys fail to be pulled from case

November 6, 2007

BY CHRISTINA HALL

FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

Stephen Grant's appointed attorneys will not be pulled off the case, and a Nov. 27 trial date for the Washington Township man charged with killing and dismembering his wife will stand.

Macomb County Circuit Judge Diane Druzinski on Monday denied a motion from Stephen Rabaut and Gail Pamukov to remove them from the case.

Advertisement

Last month, they asked to be pulled off after Macomb County prosecutors handed over hours of taped conversations between Grant and his sister at the Macomb County Jail.

They wrote in a motion that the tapes were dumped on them at the last minute and that they wouldn't have time to prepare a defense.

It isn't clear whether the conversations are incriminating or otherwise harmful to Grant's defense.

Grant is charged in the Feb. 9 strangulation and dismemberment of 34-year-old Tara Grant. Her torso was discovered in the couple's garage about three weeks after Grant reported her missing.

Also Monday in Mt. Clemens, Druzinski denied a defense motion for discovery of witnesses' criminal histories.

Lawyers on both sides are forbidden to talk to the news media about the case, under a gag order Druzinski issued.

In addition to the murder case, Grant is involved in a custody battle over his two children.

His sister and Tara Grant's sister are trying each to get full custody.

Contact **CHRISTINA HALL** at 586-469-4683 or chall@freepress.com.

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Southwestern annex fire leads to teen boy's arrest

POLICE BLOTTER

FLINT

THE FLINT JOURNAL FIRST EDITION

Tuesday, November 06, 2007

By Kim Crawford

kcrawford@flintjournal.com • 810.766.6242

FLINT - A 14-year-old Flint male was arrested Monday morning after witnesses said they saw him light papers on fire at Flint Southwestern Academy's McKinley annex.

A school juvenile officer arrested the teen just before 11 a.m., and school personnel put out the fire. There was no damage to the building.

The teen was taken to the downtown juvenile bureau, booked and released.

- Kim Crawford

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Victim's loved ones feared husband's eruption

Tuesday, November 06, 2007

By John Tunison

The Grand Rapids Press

OTSEGO -- Jennifer Drake wonders whether her sister, Pam Brainard, ever heard a message she left, warning the Otsego woman to get out of her house.

Kevin Brainard, a Plainwell police officer and an Otsego firefighter, left emotional and foreboding messages on Drake's phone Sunday, apparently after he learned Pam intended to divorce him.

"He said he couldn't be a failure, and that he wasn't going to be a failure by letting Pam leave him," Drake said Monday. "He thought he loved her so much that he couldn't stand to see her go. I don't see the sense in that, but how do you make sense of this?"

"I told her (in a message) Kevin didn't sound right and that I loved her and I hoped that she would leave. I don't know if she got it or not. I hope she did."

Police say Kevin Brainard shot and killed his wife of 14 months before turning his gun on himself. Authorities located the couple about 10 p.m. Sunday. Pam Brainard, 33, was dead, and Kevin Brainard critically wounded. He died later at a hospital.

Their 2-year-old daughter, Kayla, whom Pam called "little ladybug," was inside the house and not injured. Pam Brainard's 15-year-old son from a previous relationship, Kyle, was not home.

The apparent murder-suicide stunned the small communities of Otsego and Plainwell, particularly the neighbors near the Brookside Drive home the Brainards bought before they were married.

"Like everyone says, it's a shock," said Don DuBois, who lives across the street. "It's just so tragic."

Friends of Pam Brainard said the nurse had come to dread her husband.

"She felt really trapped," said a close friend, Rich Kremmel.

When he learned Monday that Pam Brainard was dead, Kremmel said he knew it was no accident.

"I knew he killed her. He tried to control everything she did," Kremmel said. "When he thought he was going to lose her, he offed her."

The slain woman's sister said Kevin Brainard, 31, knew how hard he could emotionally push his wife without breaking the law.

He never physically assaulted her, Drake said, but the pain inflicted through constant monitoring of her actions, reviewing her purchases and her interaction with others distressed her sister.

"You could feel her stress every time," Drake said. "She wasn't free of him, ever."

Officers on the small police forces in the two communities tried to cope with the deaths Monday. Kevin Brainard was a seven-year Plainwell officer. He served on the Otsego Fire Department for 12 years and was an assistant soccer coach at Otsego High School.

"This is so much out of character," said Otsego Police Chief Gordon Konkle, who said the Brainard's home has no history of domestic violence calls. "(Kevin) is very well-known in the community and well-liked."

Friends of Pam Brainard believe she was hesitant to call police about any domestic problems for fear it might be swept under the rug. But Konkle said such allegations are meritless. Police always take domestic violence seriously, no matter who the offender.

"It's just not tolerated anymore," he said. "We would not cover it up."

Drake said her sister did not want to threaten her husband's job with complaints about emotional abuse.

"She just wanted out," Drake said.

Friends described Pam Brainard as a nurse who cared about her patients. A leader at an Allegan County organization to help survivors of domestic violence said the murder-suicide shows that even people skilled in handling domestic disputes, such as a police officer, can fail to address problems in their own home.

"It's different when it's in your own life. When it's happening in your home or family, it's a whole different situation," said Shelly Lorbeck-Dietz, director of Sylvia's Place.

Lorbeck-Dietz said Kevin Brainard probably did not get help when he needed it, such as counseling, out of a sense of shame that can develop when personal problems arise for people in high-profile jobs.

"When you are in a high-profile profession like that, you feel like you're supposed to always know what to do," she said.

Lorbeck-Dietz said the most treacherous time in any potentially abusive relationship is when one side announces he or she is leaving.

"Typically, when they do choose to end the relationship, it is the most dangerous time. That's when there is no more control. And it's all about control," she said.

Kevin Brainard's family declined to comment.

In addition to her sister and children, Pam Brainard is survived by her parents, David and Debra Auckerman, and her brother, David Auckerman II.

-- Press staff writer Nate Reens contributed to this story.

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Muskegon Chronicle

Possible scam involving paving targets elderly

Tuesday, November 06, 2007

By Lisa Medendorp

lmedendorp@muskegonchronicle.com

Three elderly Roosevelt Park residents recently were targeted in what police believe may have been a scam involving driveway repaving.

Police Chief William Wiebenga said his department has two possible suspects and an investigation is continuing.

"It's important for folks to know this is happening," the chief said in issuing a warning to area residents.

All the victims were in their 80s.

Police received complaints last week from the victims who live in the 3100 block of Eastland, 2800 block of Dawes and 1100 block of Sherwood roads.

In each case, a man and woman in a white or cream-colored van approached the elderly people. The woman -- described as smooth-talking and convincing -- made the sales pitch.

In one case, an 87-year-old woman pulled into her driveway returning from the grocery store and the van pulled in behind her, a report said.

The woman from the van offered to seal the cracks in the elderly woman's driveway and level the areas out.

At first, the elderly woman said no, but after the other woman helped carry in her groceries and continued to make the sales pitch, she changed her mind.

After the victim paid with a check for \$150, the man spread a substance on the driveway and put water on it. When it dried, it appeared to be some type of powder that didn't fill the cracks. The couple promised to return the next day to finish the job, but never did. The check was cashed.

An 85-year-old man was approached while out working in his yard.

The couple originally asked \$800 for the repaving job, but then "relented" and said they'd do it for \$100, according to the police report.

After they left, the man decided to stop payment on the check.

In the third case, a man in his 80s paid the couple \$215 for a repaving job.

"One of the victims even got into the van with the couple and went through Norton Shores to homes where driveways had been repaved," Wiebenga said. "They were told that was what their driveway was going to look like (when the work was done)."

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Taking an interest in health care

Tuesday, November 06, 2007

The zero-percent financing and extended payment offers common in furniture and other retail stores are making inroads in the health care industry. Spectrum Health's recent decision to give patients two years to pay off medical bills is an option that could boost its bottom line and peace of mind for patients.

The no-interest payment plan unveiled last month is not a miracle cure for people facing unexpected and expensive medical bills, but could make payment less burdensome. It might also increase the chances of collecting outstanding payments.

Spectrum joins 20 other hospitals in 12 states using the CarePayment program offered by Oregon-based Aequitas Capital Management. In Michigan, Mercy Hospital in Cadillac and Grayling; Eaton Rapids Medical Center in Eaton Rapids and Schoolcraft Memorial in Manistee, also offer CarePayment. The revolving line of credit lets patients make monthly payments over 25 months. That could make out-of-pocket medical expenses easier to digest, especially for the uninsured. People with insurance who are facing rising deductibles, co-payments and other out-of-pocket costs can make use of the payment plan, too. It's open to everyone, regardless of insurance coverage.

More than 400 Spectrum patients have signed up for the program since it debuted Oct. 1. By contrast, only 100 people participated in the hospital system's interest-bearing loan programs in the past, in which minimum payments might not equal the amount of interest owed, making it a no-win proposition for the cash-strapped.

The new CarePayment option covers all Spectrum-affiliated hospitals, including the Blodgett, Butterworth, Reed City and United Memorial (Greenville) campuses. Patients opting to use the program receive a hospital-branded payment card and can add additional hospital charges as long as payments are current. The minimum monthly payments are only 4 percent of the highest balance or \$25, whichever is greater.

Make no mistake, the program is a tool to increase the odds that patients without insurance will pay their tab. But the program could allow people to receive treatments that otherwise might be out of reach if payment has to be made upfront.

Aequitas, which launched the program two years ago, says it has netted hospitals between 20 percent and 40 percent of what they bill -- better than the 8 percent to 10 percent hospitals typically recoup from the uninsured. CarePayment gives hospitals some immediate funding for patient balances prior to billing and collection on accounts judged good risks.

Big medical bills have become a leading cause of consumer bankruptcy in recent years. Providing patients with more payment options can help ease their concerns about whether they can afford to get sick.

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Detroit Free Press

November 6, 2007

COUNTY-WIDE: Report outlines areas with highest poverty

More than half of the people living below poverty in Macomb County live in Warren, Sterling Heights and Clinton Township, a report released last week shows.

But the communities with the highest rates of poverty are Mt. Clemens, Center Line, Lenox Township and Memphis.

The Macomb County Community Services Agency plans to submit it to commissioners Wednesday.

The report shows that Mt. Clemens has the highest rate of poverty at 14.1%. Warren has the most residents living below poverty with 10,112.

November 6, 2007

Project gives local produce

By [Kate Polesnak](#)
The State News

When Anne Rauscher isn't tilling her own garden at her Mason home, she's helping others acquire fresh produce from gardens throughout the Lansing area. As the director of the Garden Project, a program within the Greater Lansing Food Bank, Rauscher organizes volunteers to collect produce from area farms and distributes it to low-income individuals and organizations that serve those in need. Rauscher said it helps fulfill people's needs for freshly grown food and keeps a focus on local fare.

As long as farms are producing crops, the project tries to keep food flowing to places, Rauscher said. The importance of the program became evident to her when one woman who moved from one housing complex to another called to make sure she could still receive rations.

"That was neat to hear it was an important part of her life, and when she moved that, it moved with her," Rauscher said.

What's available to distribute depends on the harvest. This year's sweet corn crop, Rauscher explained, was less than past years, so less was given away. Some crops that were prevalent this year included apples, onions, potatoes and eggplant. Keeping in mind who will use what crops is also an important consideration, she added.

"Last week, we were distributing a whole van load of eggplant, and so when we come across a more unusual crop, we try and think of who could use it and who would know how to use it," Rauscher said.

When they can, Garden Project volunteers offer recipes to accompany the foods they distribute that would be realistic for recipients to prepare.

“With eggplant, we try to target more of the international population,” Rauscher said. “We thought with Asian folks and Middle Eastern folks, it might be more part of their cuisine.”

Rauscher has been involved with gleaning, or collecting crops over time to redistribute for about two years.

“I appreciate a chance to get your hands dirty to connect with the natural world, making sure everybody has a chance to garden, as well as the larger picture,” she said. “Thinking about our food system and how we can build a stronger local food system and that has both an environmental and social impact.”

The Garden Project also maintains community gardens that people can rent out to grow their own food. This is common for people living in apartments or complexes without yards. The gardens range in size, with the largest being 25 feet by 25 feet.

Helping others find their green thumb also is part of the Garden Project. Phil Throop, the program’s gardening and gleaning supervisor, helps people start up their own gardens by providing tilling tips, tools they can borrow and basic plants to get them started.

After spending a few years doing horticulture research at MSU, Throop decided to venture into another garden, joining the Garden Project six years ago. He said the simple job is satisfying.

“I like that it contributes to the community,” Throop said. “It helps provide a little more stable food system for people that are between and still have access to good food. That’s my favorite end of it is that it helps the community.”

Published November 6, 2007

Vickki Dozier: Volunteers still need for effort to help hungry

People News

Vickki Dozier
Lansing State Journal

Kids Against Hunger Coalition of Michigan is partnering with Kiwanis divisions throughout the state, along with hundreds of communities statewide, for a humanitarian-nutritional food "super packaging" rally.

Volunteers from around the state, of all ages, will be coming together to package meals for some of the world's most malnourished. The rally will be held from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Saturday at the Kinawa Middle School gym on Kinawa Road in Okemos. They're still looking for a hundred volunteers.

The objective is to package a minimum of 100,000 KAH meals. At least 50,000 of the meals will be donated to local food shelters in Michigan. Remaining meals will be shipped to hungry and starving children in Africa, Haiti, Guatemala and the Dominican Republic.

To volunteer, contact David Siegrist at (734) 837-5409 or Bob Munson at 675-7277).

HELP FOR THE HOLIDAYS

Families in need

More in metro Detroit expected to seek food, aid

November 6, 2007

BY CHRISTINA HALL

FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

Laura White said she and her family live on disability, so there isn't much money left after the bills are paid and the food and toiletries are bought for the Warren foursome.

When the holidays approach, it's hard for the 39-year-old wife and mother of two to have cash for lots of food and gifts. Last year, she turned to the Good Samaritan Coalition in Warren for help.

Advertisement

"They provided every single thing. We had a full meal, turkey and all the fixings," she said.

"It just makes everything the way it's supposed to be," White and her husband, Don, 56, have health problems. She said she will probably seek holiday assistance again this year.

More metro Detroit families are expected to need help this year with food, gifts and basic necessities, partly because of the slumping economy.

Some of those seeking help used to be donors, said Michelle St. Pierre, director of public relations for the Salvation Army's Eastern Michigan Division, which includes Wayne, Oakland and Macomb counties.

"I personally feel that the economic cutback is hitting all income levels, not just the low-income levels," said Pamela Zendt, operations manager of Samaritan House in Washington Township, which serves northern Macomb County. "The \$100,000 income levels are finding themselves out of work."

Frank Taylor, director of the Macomb County Community Services Agency, agreed.

"I see there's a new type of customer we're working with -- new families that aren't accustomed to seeking assistance from the government or organizations because of foreclosure or loss of jobs," he said.

The needs this time of year often aren't just holiday meals or toys. They're essentials -- a winter coat, a blanket, a mattress, money to pay energy bills.

Those who work with the needy are optimistic that those whose dollars aren't stretched as thin will give -- perhaps for the first time -- or make deeper contributions than in the past.

John Ziraldo, chief executive officer of Lighthouse of Oakland County, said his group helps about 1,200 families. Last year, it helped an extra 200 families, and the community responded to the call.

"There are many more families struggling to make ends meet. Loss of jobs, family breakups," he said. "There's hardly a person you'll meet that doesn't know a person who is struggling."

Delores Bennett, who started the Adopt-A-Child program in Detroit more than 40 years ago, also expects to have more children in need. More than 4,000, and possibly up to 5,000, children were given clothing and toys or games last year. This year, the need could be as high as 8,000 children, she said.

"We'll handle as much as we can," the 74-year-old Detroit resident said.

On Monday, the City of Sterling Heights gathered groups to develop a list of needy families for the holidays, continuing a tradition about 20 years old. The list has 521 families and is expected to approach last year's total of 691 families, said Steve Guitar, the city's community relations director. As in prior years, he said, there isn't a shortage of people who want to help.

"All the community is rising to the meet the needs of our economic crisis," said Denise Amenta, chairwoman of Good Samaritan Coalition at St. Mark Catholic Church in Warren. "People who never helped are helping."

That's good news for families, such as the Whites.

"I could not make it through every month of the year" without Good Samaritan Coalition, Laura White said. "I could not make it. I think you have to be in this position to know how grateful I am. If it wasn't for people like Denise, I don't know, the world would be off balance."

Contact **CHRISTINA HALL** at 586-469-4683 or chall@freepress.com.

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MORNING SUN

State budget woes impact Salvation Army

By JEREMY H. DICKMAN
Sun Community Editor

Michigan's budget crisis has created more problems for those in need of assistance.

With the Department of Human Services suspended from assisting residents with State Emergency Relief payments on utilities and most housing since mid-April, this has put a strain on local emergency agencies like The Salvation Army.

"Budgeted money for assistance ran low several months ago and we've been functioning on a very limited amount of income since then, nowhere near meeting the need we're seeing," said Capt. Aaron Ortman of The Salvation Army in Mt. Pleasant.

From June to September, the Mt. Pleasant office had to deny 459 households financial help because they did not have the funds necessary, Ortman said. In October, the number increased to an all-time monthly high of 128 denied.

"We know other agencies are experiencing the same budget problems because we have all had to send clients around or call out to other agencies to see who might have money at that time," Social Services Director Erin Herrington said in a press release.

The Salvation Army in Gratiot and Isabella counties receive income through a variety of sources, including state contracts that are not yet made available or confirmed to continue.

Contracts that have been approved, the press release said, are being allocated in one-month increments or have been delayed in reaching the counties.

In Isabella County, Capt. Jenny Ortman of the Mt. Pleasant office, said they are looking at delays of 15 to 30 days on some of their contracts, including the Michigan Public Service Commission, which provides utility assistance and was expected Nov. 1.

"The problem is a lot of the people have already received shut-off notices and they were expecting money the first of November, but we can't provide it," Ortman said. "We're looking at mid-to-late November for utility assistance."

Because of the lack of funds, the Mt. Pleasant branch is basically limited to offering help through their food pantry and thrift store, which are aided by donations.

"We have nothing," Ortman said.

Gratiot County is also experiencing a decline in assistance able to be given.

"At this point in the year, we have not been able to help as many people," said Capt. Allen Hanton of The Salvation Army of Gratiot County.

Comparing this year to last year, Hanton said they helped 19 more people last year.

"We would have been able to help more this year, but with the state shutting down earlier that drained a lot of our resources," Hanton said.

In housing program assistance, Hanton said the Gratiot office helped 12 people from Aug. to Oct. 1, 2006 and during that same time this year, 10 people were given help.

"With the proper funds we would have been able to double the amount of people helped," Hanton said.

For Gratiot County, Hanton said the areas affected by the budget crisis are the social services areas including energy and housing assistance programs.

“We’re sorry the state is in the shape it’s in, but The Salvation Army will continue to help how it can with the resources it does have,” Hanton said.

Looking at the whole person, The Salvation Army assists those in need on a case-by-case basis with housing, food, medical, and with a Thrift Store in Mt. Pleasant. The Salvation Army is also a full-service church.

A major source of income for The Salvation Army is the yearly Red Kettle holiday campaign, which begins later this month, but many retailers have limited the allowed ringing days or forbidden the organization completely.

“This year we’re a little worried about the Red Kettle campaign because we are in limited locations,” Ortman said. “We need all we can get at Christmas to last us the entire year.”

Going forward, Ortman said public donations are going to be a key.

“As we look to the future with the state pulling more and more social services, it may fall to the general public with donations and grants and such,” Ortman said.

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http://www.themorningsun.com/stories/110607/loc_salvation.shtml



ANTRIM COUNTY NEWS

Lining up for warmth

By Hadley Robinson
Editor

MANCELONA - On the coldest morning of the season thus far, crowds lined up outside St. Anthony's Church in Mancelona hours before the doors would open making brand new winter coats, snowsuits, boots and more available to anybody with children between birth and five years old.

An hour before the distribution began, the line was already 16 deep. Meanwhile, inside, about the same number of volunteers were busy preparing for the rush.

Last Thursday, Oct. 25 was the third annual winter distribution at the Antrim County Baby Food Pantry. Though the pantry offers used clothes, diapers, formula and other baby needs twice a month throughout the year, each October it has all new materials available.

"Our idea is that anybody can go to a garage sale to buy used clothes, but once a year kids can come get new coats, leggings and boots," volunteer Mary Williams, also a member of the food pantry board said.

Once the clock hit 11:30 a.m., dozens filed down the stairs into the basement of St. Anthony's, where the food pantry does most of its operations. Many parents had kids in tow, and some of the ones who could talk, helped pick out what they wanted.

Tables were lined with the goods, sorted by size, age and gender. When a parent checked in, they were given one trash bag per child and started zooming around the basement to find the hottest items in what volunteer and board member Mae Mohr called "organized confusion."

The overall mood of parents was excited, especially when they found boots that matched the snowsuit and scored other good finds. Smiles came across the faces of children as they were handed boots with Rainbow Bright on them, or special light-up soles.

At 12:10 p.m., just forty minutes after parents started coming in, the tables of new clothes were nearly empty and the flow had slowed, though the pantry remained open until 4 p.m. for the rest of the new clothes and used items.

By the time the pantry closed at 4 p.m., it had serviced 129 families and a total of 185 children.

You don't need to be enrolled in any specific program or have a certain income level to benefit from the services of the food pantry.

"All they have to do is have a baby," Williams said.

The money for all the new winter clothes comes from fund-raising, donations and a little bargain hunting too.

The pantry benefits from fund-raisers like the Golf Outing and Crop Walk. According to volunteer and board member Cathy Kestner, half of the earnings from the Golf Outing are used just for the winter distribution.

At the end of the year when stores are having winter sales the volunteers go around to stores like Walmart, Kmart, Target and Meijer all throughout the state and see what kind of deals they can find.

One might go into a store and say, "I'll take all your boots, what can we work out?"

"For this, we don't have a lot of pride," Kestner said. "We beg, we borrow."

The Antrim County Baby Pantry started in March of 2001, and they partner with other governmental agencies to provide help for those raising small children. Vouchers are available at places like the Northwest Michigan Community Health Agency, Head Start, the local libraries, Community Lighthouse and are used for additional food, formula and other materials than the basic needs the baby pantry already provides.

St. Anthony's provides use of a room in the basement, so the baby pantry need not pay rent for a place or for utilities like electricity and heat.

"The church is really generous to us," Williams said.

On a normal Thursday, Williams said the pantry services between 45 and 60 families, but of late more have come for help.

"Lately it's been more because the way the economy is," Williams said. The pantry has lots of used clothes, that they clean up and give away. Often parents who received items from the pantry, bring clothing back when their children grow out of it but it isn't completely worn. By recycling the outgrown clothes, parents receive a voucher for an additional item.

Hadley Robinson can be reached at hrobinson@michigannewspapers.com or by calling 231-5338523.

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Radio hosts assist charity

Tuesday, November 06, 2007

THE SAGINAW NEWS

A classic rock station's on-air hosts will broadcast live from Famous Dave's, 5665 Bay in Saginaw Township, urging listeners to help fill a new RV with nonperishable foods and frozen turkeys from 6 a.m. Wednesday to

3 p.m. Thursday.

The station, WILZ-FM, 104.5, which uses the moniker Wheelz, will stage the overnight event to collect donations for the City Rescue Mission of Saginaw, 1021 Burt.

The Food-A-Bago is an annual station event. Volunteers from the mission will stand outside and assist with the collection of goods.

For more Information, call Adam Shilling at 776-2151. v

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Michigan budget cuts impact Gaylord

By Cathy Landry, News Editor

OTSEGO COUNTY — In the \$9.8-billion Michigan general fund budget for fiscal year 2007-2008 there is a mixed bag of increases and cuts in funding and staffing for some departments that will impact Otsego County residents.

Some of the budget highlights include

- a slight increase in funding for secondary schools;
- a staffing boost for the Department of Human Services (DHS);
- and the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) will receive a small funding increase but will lose 14 conservation officers.

Secondary education will receive \$13 billion in aid. Lower-funded districts will get an increase of \$96 per pupil, while higher-funded districts will get an additional \$48 per pupil. Both Gaylord Community Schools (GCS) and Vanderbilt Area School (VAS) will be receiving the \$96-per-pupil increase bringing the total amount per pupil to \$7,181.

"It is nice that we are seeing an equity payment and getting a little bit closer to the rest of the schools in the state," said VAS Supt. Jeff Liedel. "But it is not keeping up with inflation. On the other hand, there are other programs that are being cut and any increase is better than being cut."

With 200 students, the increase will add \$19,200 to the Vanderbilt budget, Liedel said.

Carlee Allen, GCS director of business/finance, voiced a similar opinion.

"It will plug a hole for awhile," Allen commented. "It's great that we got something. It is good that they (the state) can do what they can do, but it still comes down to the fact that we continue to have 3- to 4-percent operating increases and we only get 1 percent. We still have to make budget cuts."

Allen was referring to the annual increases for staffing costs.

She said the \$96-per-pupil increase on a student count of 3,322 will add \$318,912 to the district's coffers. Allen noted, however, the district already adopted a budget cutting about \$300,000 in expenses, so she saw this increase as more of a break-even point.

Elsewhere in the state budget, the DHS budget provides for 200 more social services positions, according to DHS state spokesperson Maureen Sorbet.

"The 200 social services positions were added in the budget so that we can reduce the caseloads in the child welfare portions of the agency," Sorbet said. "We have caseloads that are over national recommended levels so the budget reflects an increase in that area and this will help with this overload."

The budget said that more foster care would be turned over to private agencies, but Sorbet said that it would be a negligible change since about 60 percent of foster care already is done with private licensed agencies.

"We do work with private agencies; they do about 60 percent," Sorbet said. "There already was a public private partnership that continues. This is not a move toward privatization."

Sorbet said these changes continue to parallel Gov. Jennifer Granholm's child welfare initiative to provide more support for children's services.

"This is further indication for support of this plan with the additional staffing," Sorbet said.

In the DNR budget, the plan calls for laying off 14 conservation officers, which will leave six counties without officers.

According to DNR press representative Mary Detloff, DNR Director Rebecca Humphries going to meet Friday with various unions to begin the layoff process.

Detloff said it will be several weeks before the layoffs will be announced and which counties will be affected. She added that there will continue to be coverage in the affected counties, but the response time may lag.

The earliest layoffs will occur in early December, Detloff said.

The DNR got a slight budget increase from \$288 million to \$289 million. The budget also presumes that the Legislature will pass proposed hunting fee increases by Jan. 15 that would add about \$8 million to the DNR budget.

Contact Cathy Landry at 748-4515 or cathy@gaylordheraldtimes.com.

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Target 8 Investigation New MSP HQ: Necessity or Boondoggle?

Updated: Nov 5, 2007 06:14 PM EST



The current Michigan State Police headquarters

By HENRY ERB
Target 8 Investigator

GRAND RAPIDS -- It happened while lawmakers and bureaucrats were desperately searching for budget cuts -- or increased taxes. It happened when there was talk of laying off state troopers, after they had to park and watch to save gas and money, around the time the troopers union kicked in cash to save state police jobs.

First a legislative committee, then the Administration, OK'd a deal to build and lease a new state police headquarters building in downtown Lansing. Monthly payments totaling \$116 million over 25 years starting in 2009, after which the state can buy the building for one dollar.

The new building, to be constructed by two politically connected developers, replaces the existing headquarters on the Michigan State University campus that's been there since the 40's.



The proposed new MSP headquarters

"How many millions of dollars do you put into a 70-plus-year-old building that you don't own," asks Terri Fitzpatrick, who handles real estate for the Department of Management and Budget. "At some point a decision has to be made that we need to look forward to the future."

But should the government have obligated taxpayers to a new expense in the middle of a financial crisis?



Terri Fitzpatrick of the Department of Management and Budget

About the only public opposition to the deal during the approval process came from State Senator Cameron Brown, R-Coldwater. He believes the building is not needed. He was belatedly joined by 50 other Republicans last week who were silent during the approval process but now think the deal is "a boondoggle. It's not the right thing to do," said Rep. Mike Nofs, a former state police command officer.

Officials who are for the project say it will save rent on other buildings by consolidating other functions into the new headquarters and avoid future unknown maintenance costs at the old headquarters.



Some of the GOP opponents

Others, however, point out that the state is paying a dollar a year rent to MSU for the current headquarters complex and about \$380,000 a year in maintenance costs. The lease is good through 2030. Spending a couple million dollars on a new roof and other rehab and staying put could save taxpayers millions of dollars, they say.

"The building does need a little bit of repair but it's in pretty good shape. It's structurally sound and it will serve us through the year 2030," said State Rep. Rick Jones.



Kyle Mellin, editor of the Michigan News

"This is not the best time," admits the DMB's Fitzpatrick. "The

and Research Service

best time would have been 10 years ago or more. but we can't delay that decision making."

The fact is the project has been under consideration for 10 years. It began in 1997 during the Republican administration of Gov. John Engler. Democratic Gov. Jennifer Granholm inherited the project.

Over that time it was stopped by a taxpayers lawsuit and trapped in a legislative committee until its chair was term-limited from office. The project has shrunk significantly in size and cost. State staff people have spent a lot of time on it and think they got a good deal from the developers.

"I think it's just finally come to that pitch now in 2007 when they can actually, finally, do it," said Kyle Melinn, the news editor for the Michigan Information and Research Service who has been watching the project over the years. "And now it's one of the worst budgets in 20-30 years and it's just horrible timing."

He said officials did consider delaying the project until Michigan's financial condition improves but ended up with discussions that ended something like this: "When is a good time? If not now, when? When is the budget really going to be better? Next year? Will it be better in two years? We can't really say so let's just bite it and do it now," according to Melinn.

Also pushing the project is a state policy to move as much government operation as possible into central cities. That's been happening in Lansing over the past decade. The MSP HQ would be the last major function to move downtown.

The project began as a deal between the City and the developers to help revitalize downtown Lansing. The city owned the land and selected the developers to come up with a project. State officials signed onto the deal without seeking or considering any alternatives.

The developers have been partners before in constructing a major state building. Joel Ferguson and Gary Granger, both well known among state politicians and bureaucrats, collaborated on the new House Office Building in 1998.

Ferguson is a former Democratic National Committeeman and chairs the MSU Board of Trustees. Granger, whose company has offices in Lansing and Kent County, sits on the Ferris State University Board. Both men are generous political contributors. State records show Ferguson has contributed more than \$50,000 to Democratic candidates and causes since 1998, Granger more than \$200,000 to Republicans.

That kind of familiarity can't hurt them when dealing with the government. But did it influence this project or its timing? Would the state have approved the project during a fiscal crisis if some other developer was involved?

Granger replies: "I think we obviously are excited about this project moving ahead but, frankly, this project has been on the verge of going ahead for the last five years."

"I think more of it has to do with (Joel Ferguson's) overall persistence than any strings he may pull," said Melinn. "Joel Ferguson and Granger are both very persistent. Joel Ferguson has not let this thing die. I mean he has reworked this project, worked this project, kept driving and driving to get this thing done."

But the fact that the state signed onto this deal without even seeking out other developers or ideas is costing the taxpayers money. A Senate Fiscal Agency analysis found that had the State used the State Building Authority for the project it would have saved \$45 million.

Why didn't it?

"State Building Authority projects are financed," said the DMB's Fitzpatrick. "It would compete with other projects, with colleges and universities."

The state could save money if it comes up with enough cash to buy out the developers' interest a

year after occupancy. The lease allows for that option.

Meanwhile, House Republicans have introduced legislation to stop the project.



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